



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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#### Learn more about prostate cancer

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health's Cancer Prevention Program has partnered with many community organizations and individuals to spread the word about cancer.

Prostate cancer is the second most common form of cancer in the state of Alabama, and more than 70 percent of all prostate cancer is found in men 65 years of age or older.

Prostate cancer is characterized by the abnormal growth of cells, and it affects the walnut-size gland which surrounds the urethra in a man. While scientists do not always agree on the risk factors for the disease, studies continue to investigate the influence of high hormone levels, diets high in animal fats, and diets low in fruits and vegetables.

Racial disparities are noted in the prevalence of the disease as well as in mortality rates.

According to the Center for Health Statistics, the death rate for African American men supersedes the rate for any other racial/ethnic group. In 2003 in Alabama, white males experienced 20.7 prostate cancer deaths per 100,000 population, while the rate of prostate cancer deaths for black and other males was 35.6 per 100,000 population.

Lawrence McRae of Tuskegee became a prostate health activist two years ago. He started by standing on street corners, handing out business cards which read, "When last have you had your prostate checked?" He also places educational posters in men's rooms in many counties. Today McRae is the founder of the McRae Prostate Cancer Awareness Foundation.

McRae is dedicated to educating the public. He said, "Poverty, embarrassment, fear and incontinence issues often prevent men from seeking help until it is too late. People need assistance in getting the information."

To date, more than 500 individuals have been interviewed because of McRae's efforts. He continues to distribute thousands of pieces of cancer prevention materials throughout the Black Belt and other rural regions of the state. The pamphlets were obtained from the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program. His dream is to one day own a cancer screening van.

McRae and the Alabama Department of Public Health want men to recognize the signs of prostate cancer which may include:

- spasms that interrupt urination
- a slow stream of urine

- frequent urination
- pain or discomfort during urination
- sharp pains in the rectum or anal area
- a continuous dribble or not being able to stop urinating
- the inability to completely empty the bladder
- evidence of blood or urine stains
- bone pain
- loss of sex drive
- kidney failure

Men are encouraged to ask their doctor about the benefits and risks of getting a digital rectal examination (DRE) and, if they are age 50 and older, having a Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test. Men with a family history of the disease or who are in a high-risk category should begin screening at age 45. The most important thing a man can do is understand screening tests, treatment options, and make an informed decision.

According to the American Cancer Society's "Facts and Figures 2005," Alabama is expected to have 4,360 new cases of prostate cancer and 530 men are expected to die of the disease this year.

Many cancer deaths are attributed to lifestyle factors such as tobacco use, diet and physical inactivity. These are areas in which Alabamians can make changes that affect their risk of developing cancer and other chronic diseases.

For additional information about prostate cancer call the following toll-free numbers:

1-800-ACS-2345 - American Cancer Society

1-800-4-CANCER. - National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

1-800-242-2383 - American Foundation for Urologic Disease

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